

First Words

A First Steps Communications Tool for Families From Family to Family

"...for a child with a developmental delay or disability, their progress in attaining developmental goals can be helped or hindered by their emotional sense of self."

Alphabet Soup

Each month we will cover a few abbreviations or acronyms parents might hear while in First Steps. Sometimes it is awkward for families to ask. Do you know these?

- **IMH = Infant Mental Health**

The emotional well-being of an infant or very young child.

- **LPCC = Local Planning and Coordinating Council**

A local planning group made up of early intervention providers, parents, and other key community members which meets regularly to plan for the implementation of the First Steps system in a county.

Infant Mental Health article adapted from :

[Mental Health Assessment, Indiana Association for Infant and Toddler Mental Health, Mental Health Task Force, April, 2004](#)

Infant Mental Health – What Behaviors Should You Be Concerned About?

When one thinks of the term “mental health”, it’s natural to think of adults. But an infant or toddler’s mental health is of vital importance to their development. In fact, a child’s emotional well-being is the foundation necessary to productively function in family and other personal relationships, school, work and community life. Specifically, for a child with a developmental delay or disability, their progress in attaining developmental goals can be helped or hindered by their emotional sense of self. First Steps offers mental health services to children and their families that range from child and/or family counseling (when concerns are related to the child’s developmental needs), group counseling, and testing and assessment.

How do you know if your child might benefit from mental health services through First Steps? With infants, the concerns generally focus on self-regulating abilities (calming, sleeping, feeding) and the development of healthy attachments (bonding with caregivers). For toddlers, more behavior concerns such as excessive withdrawal, regression in developmental skills or extreme aggression may signal a need for mental health services. In addition, the following kinds of “red flag” behaviors may prompt a provider to talk with a family about mental health services in First Steps:

For infants (age 0-12 months)

- Excessive crying (colicky, cries more than 3 hours in 24 hrs)
- Sleep disturbance
- Feeding disorders
- Extreme stranger anxiety
- Won’t cuddle
- No or limited eye contact
- No smiling
- Little or no enjoyment of social interactions with others
- Muscular rigidity (freezing)
- Little emotion (rarely coos or babbles)
- Sensory sensitivity (unusual sensitivity to sight, sound and/or touch)

For toddlers (age 1 to 3 years)

- No or limited eye contact
- Significant sleeping problems (night terrors, wakes often, can’t settle at bedtime)
- Eating problems
- Frustration with communication
- Continual thumb sucking
- Inability to separate from caregiver without extreme anxiety
- Severe temper tantrums or aggression
- Too social (friendly) to unfamiliar adults
- Trouble attending to play or social activities
- Difficulty with transitions between activities
- Self injurious behaviors
- Tries to take care of parent
- Loss of skills in any developmental area

If you have concerns about your child with regards to mental health, ask your service coordinator about options available. In next month’s issue we’ll present information about the evaluation/assessment process with regards to mental health and tell you more about the types of professionals who provide mental health services in First Steps.

The LPCC and How Parents Can Become Involved

Indiana Association for Infant and Toddler Mental Health 6th Annual Conference

Healing the Child in Juvenile Court: Opportunities for Prevention & Early Intervention

August 13, 2004
9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Riley Hospital Outpatient
Center - Ruth Lilly Conference
Center

Registration
Registration fee is \$50 and
includes workshop materials,
continental breakfast and
lunch. Class size is limited.
To register, call UTS Connect
at (317) 274-7159, or outside
the Indianapolis metropolitan
area, (800) 887-1467. Fees are
payable to Indiana University.

First Steps is a family centered program to aid children who experience developmental delays or have a disability. The family is seen as an equal team member in making decisions for their child, and a plan of care (IFSP) is developed that takes into consideration the needs of the entire family. With that in mind, families are also invited and encouraged to help guide the First Steps system by joining their LPCC. The Local Planning and Coordinating Council (LPCC) meets regularly to plan for the implementation of the First Steps system in your county. They see that all early intervention services provided fall within state guidelines and also address local service delivery needs.

The structure of local planning and coordinating councils varies somewhat across the state. Some communities have an LPCC that serves just their county, while other

counties have joined together in an LPCC. In addition to the local LPCCs, there are now councils in the 14 clusters that were formed this year to streamline the services of the system point of entry for each county. Parents are needed to represent the family perspective on the cluster councils. (To determine what cluster your county is in, visit http://www.in.gov/fssa/first_step/pdf/clustermap.pdf to view a statewide map.)

If you, as a parent, are interested in serving either on your county LPCC or your cluster council, get in touch with your cluster contact. Information for each cluster contact is available at http://www.in.gov/fssa/first_step/pdf/ClusterContacts.pdf. He or she will be able to provide more information about meeting details for your county. The family point of view is highly valued in our First Steps system. Speak Up—join your LPCC today!!

Advocacy Tip of the Month

If you are interested in serving on your LPCC or cluster council but have questions about your role, contact Family to Family and ask about our Families As Advisors training. This session will orient you to council structure, cover tips on how to prepare yourself, and help you formulate questions to ask up front to find out just exactly what it involves.

Your opinions and experiences as a consumer in the First Steps system are important. Upon request, Family to Family will bring this training to your area to help build family leadership and participation in your local community.

Resources for Families and Providers

Check out these resources on infant mental health:

Zero to Three
http://www.zerotothree.org/ztt_parents.html

Action Alliance for Children
<http://www.4children.org/news/702infmh.htm>

Society for Research in Child Development
Emotions matter: Making the case for the role of young children's emotional development for early school readiness
<http://www.srkd.org/spr.html>

For more information about Family to Family, visit our web page at http://www.in.gov/fssa/first_step/f2f/index.html or contact Mary Jo Paladino at 574-273-6019 or mpaladin@indiana.edu